



U.S. jobless claims fall again as some states end federal aid

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fewer Americans sought unemployment benefits last week — the latest encouraging sign for the rebounding U.S. economy — just as Republican-led states are moving to cut off a federal benefit for the jobless.

Twenty-two states, from Texas and Georgia to Ohio and Iowa, plan to begin blocking a \$300-a-week federal payment for the unemployed starting in June, according to an Associated Press analysis. All have Republican governors and legislatures.

Recipients have been able to receive the \$300 federal benefit on top of their regular state unemployment aid. The payment, which lasts nationwide until Sept. 6, was included in President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion financial rescue package.

The states that plan to cut off the federal benefit represent nearly every one that is controlled fully by Republicans. Florida is considering ending the supplemental payment. And Nebraska, which officially has



In this Monday, May 17, 2021, photo, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly tours a COVID-19 vaccination clinic for students aged 12 through 15 set up in a gym at Topeka High School in Topeka, Kan.

Associated Press

a nonpartisan legislature, has said it will maintain the payments while it evaluates all pandemic-related jobless benefits.

The move is also being considered in two additional states that have Democratic governors, Kansas and Wisconsin, though the

Wisconsin governor is likely to veto any rollback passed by the legislature. As a result of the action, about 3.5 million people will have

their benefits reduced in the coming months, according to Oxford Economics.

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Sharing Menu \$50 per couple



2 appetizers



1 Main dish



1 Dessert

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Republican Wisconsin Assembly Speaker Robin Vos describes a GOP-authored bill that would end a \$300 unemployment supplemental payment as the measure's co-sponsor, Sen. Howard Marklein, listens during a Capitol news conference on Tuesday, May 18, 2021, in Madison, Wisconsin.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

Those cutoffs coincide with a steady decline in the number of Americans seeking unemployment aid, which fell last week to 444,000, a new pandemic low, the Labor Department said Thursday. Jobless claims have now dropped in five of the past six weeks, a sign that the economy keeps strengthening as consumers spend freely again, viral infections drop and business restrictions ease.

In addition to ending the extra payment, most of the same states are also withdrawing from programs that provide jobless aid to self-employed or gig workers and to people who have been unemployed for more than six months. Among them is Latricia

Hampton, who worries that without the \$300 weekly federal check, she will fall behind on her mobile phone and internet bills. "Those smaller bills are what I'm going to have to get rid of," said Hampton, 40, who lives in Gary, Indiana. "That might not sound like much to some people, but that's another barrier to me finding work. That's my kids who can't do schoolwork at home on the computer." Hampton had worked at a hair salon near Gary until last April, when it shut down because of the pandemic. Now, she spends hours a day applying for jobs on her phone but has yet to make it past the interview stage. She also has had trouble finding jobs that fit with her two young children's schedules, who are

4 and 8.

"It's not like I can just go pick up a job at McDonald's, and that'll solve my problems," she said. "I have two young kids. They need me, and when I'm not there, they need to be cared for. I'm a working-class single parent. We still need help in this pandemic, not pushed off the edge of a cliff and told to fly again."

About 16 million people were receiving unemployment benefits during the week ending May 1, the latest period for which data is available, the government said Thursday. That is down from 16.9 million in the previous week, and it suggests that some Americans who had been receiving aid have found jobs.

In Oklahoma, Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt said this week that the state will end the federal benefit on June 26. That was unhappy news for Gilbert Cruz and his wife, Marissa Enloe-Cruz, whose graphic design company in Tulsa has suffered a collapse in business since the pandemic struck.

Both received jobless aid under the program for self-employed. Now, they're unsure what they'll do, especially because they're uneasy about sending their 7-year-old son back to school before being vaccinated.

"It's going to mean picking and choosing what bills to pay, or getting behind on things," Enloe-Cruz said. "It will mean whether or not we're able to put food on the table."

Eliminating the \$300-a-week payment is one of several measures that states have taken to restrict or eliminate jobless aid and press more recipients to seek work. That trend gained momentum after the April jobs report, released earlier this month, showed that employers added far fewer jobs than

expected, in part because many couldn't find enough workers.

Research suggests that roughly half the unemployed are receiving more income from jobless benefits, when you include the weekly \$300 federal supplement, than their former jobs paid them. An analysis by Bank of America found that people who earned under \$32,000 at their old jobs are likely now receiving more in unemployment aid than they did from working.

Yet some point to the steady decline in the number of Americans receiving jobless benefits as evidence that most of the unemployed are still willing to take jobs when they're available.

"Today's data indicates that unemployment aid is not keeping workers on the sidelines," said Andrew Stettner, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation. "Emergency unemployment aid is doing what it is meant to do: Serving as a temporary lifeline while workers search for and return to work."

In July last year, four months after the pandemic tore through the economy, roughly twice as many people as now — 32 million — were receiving some form of unemployment benefit, though that figure was likely inflated by fraud. As recently as late February this year, about 20 million people were receiving aid. Even so, 19 states say they will also cut off all benefits for the self-employed and gig workers, who became newly eligible for jobless aid under a relief package that was enacted in March last year. They will also drop out of a federal program for people who have been out of work for more than six months.

Those moves will end all benefits for approximately

3.6 million of the nearly 16 million people receiving aid — about one in four of current recipients — according to the Century Foundation.

In addition, 35 states have reinstated a requirement that jobless aid recipients search for work in order to keep receiving benefits. That requirement had been suspended at the start of the pandemic, when many businesses were closed and Americans were encouraged to stay at home. In Dayton, Ohio, work evaporated for Terri Ashman, a house painter, and her husband, Steve, a remodeler, after the pandemic hit in March of last year. They struggled to obtain unemployment benefits because of delays that resulted from a flood of applicants that overwhelmed many state workforce agencies.

Eventually, they did receive aid and began to save money, in part because of the \$300-a-week federal payment. By then, they had moved in with Terri's mother after a period of homelessness.

They now have nearly the entire \$8,000 payment they need for their new home in Celina, near Dayton. They are required to pay a year's rent because of their credit problems.

But the two have little else saved and were counting on the continued federal payments through September to pay bills. Terri Ashman, 54, just received her second coronavirus vaccine shot, but she struggles with asthma and high blood pressure. She said she is willing to work even minimum wage jobs. But first she needs to get back on her feet.

"We finally were almost able to crawl out of this hole," she said. "Without (the \$300), we're going to be living on the edge of the cliff." □

DOJ: Alabama prisons remain deadly, homicides increasing

By **KIM CHANDLER**

MONTGOMERY, Ala., (AP)

— Alabama prisons remain deadly and dangerous two years after federal officials warned the state of unconstitutional conditions, the U.S. Department of Justice said, noting that inmate-on-inmate homicides have increased from already high levels.

Failed negotiations make it clear that Alabama will not voluntarily bring prisons into compliance and judicial intervention is needed, the Justice Department wrote Wednesday in an amended complaint in its ongoing lawsuit against the state.

The Justice Department sued Alabama in December after issuing findings in 2019 and 2020 warning that conditions in state lockups are so poor that they violate the U.S. Constitution.

"Since the United States notified the State of its findings, Alabama's Prisons for Men have remained extremely overcrowded, prisoner-on-prisoner homicides have increased, prisoner-on-prisoner violence including sexual abuse has continued unabated, the physical facilities have remained inadequate, use of excessive force by security staff has remained common, and staffing rates have remained critically and dangerously low,"



This Oct. 22, 2019 photo shows a sign calling for "HELP" in the window of a cell seen during a visit with state officials at the Holman Prison in Atmore, Alabama.

Associated Press

the amended complaint signed by Attorney General Merrick Garland stated. In an emailed response, the Alabama Department of Corrections said the Justice Department is relying upon "anecdotal narratives" while ignoring the state's efforts to improve conditions.

"The state remains, however, disappointed by the DOJ's unwillingness to acknowledge the substantial investments and improvements made by the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) with the

additional resources made available by Governor (Kay) Ivey and the Legislature," a statement from the prison system read.

The state has increased funding to the prison system and boosted pay for correctional officers and created new categories of positions as part of an effort to increase staff. Ivey's office is also pursuing the leasing of three large prisons that would replace aging and dilapidated facilities.

The lawsuit contends Alabama is violating the constitutional rights of prisoners,

including the ban on cruel and unusual punishment, by failing to prevent excessive levels of prisoner-on-prisoner violence and sexual abuse, failing to protect prisoners from the use of excessive force by security staff and failing to provide safe conditions of confinement.

The state has acknowledged problems but denied that conditions are unconstitutional.

The Justice Department said the homicide rate in Alabama's prisons for men in 2018 was more than seven

times the national average for prisons and in fiscal year 2020 at least 16 prisoners were killed by other prisoners, according to available state data. Federal officials also said the prison system is not accurately reporting prison deaths.

The Justice Department said a prisoner at Kilby Correctional Facility died from multiple stab wounds to his head, abdomen, back, and arm, but the state classified the prisoner's death as "natural." A 2017 autopsy revealed a prisoner at Elmore Correctional Facility died from blunt force trauma to the head. ADOC classified the death as "natural."

The filing listed a litany of incidents that federal officials said demonstrate a "pervasive pattern of life-threatening violence." Those included that:

— A prisoner at Easterling Correctional Facility in February was stabbed multiple times by two other prisoners in the head, neck, and shoulders and had to be airlifted to a hospital.

— A prisoner at Easterling in August was seriously burned after another prisoner microwaved a mixture of baby oil, shaving powder and coffee granules and poured it on the victim's face and body while he was sleeping. □

Hero intern who helped save Giffords will run for her seat

By **JONATHAN J. COOPER**

Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Daniel Hernandez Jr., the intern hailed as a hero for helping save the life of then-U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords following an attempted assassination a decade ago, announced Thursday he's running to represent her former district in Congress. Hernandez was a 20-year-old college student in his first week interning for Giffords when he went to her "Congress on your corner" constituent event where a gunman opened fire killing six and injuring 13, including Giffords, in 2011. He kept the congresswoman conscious and applied pres-

sure to her head wound until paramedics arrived. His actions were widely praised during a period of shock and unity that gripped the nation. Then-President Barack Obama called Hernandez a hero at a memorial for the victims and also while he a guest at the State of the Union address weeks later.

A Democrat, Hernandez currently represents parts of Tucson in the state House of Representatives. He's developed a moderate profile as one of a handful of Democrats who occasionally cross the aisle to work with Republicans, sometimes to the frustration of more progressive members

of his party.

"Gabby Giffords continues to inspire me and I strive to follow her example of service for our community," Hernandez said in a statement announcing his candidacy.

A trauma surgeon who operated on Giffords that day, Dr. Randy Friese, is also running for the former Giffords seat. He now serves with Hernandez in the House. State Sen. Kirsten Engel is also seeking the Democratic nomination.

Arizona's 2nd Congressional District has historically been one of the most competitive in the state. It currently covers parts of Tucson, stretching to the



In this Jan. 8, 2014, file photo, Daniel Hernandez Jr., a former intern for U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, speaks prior to a remembrance ceremony on the third anniversary of the Tucson shootings, in Tucson, Ariz.

Associated Press

state's borders with Mexico and New Mexico, but the boundaries will change

before next year's election due to the every-decade redistricting. □

U.S. ends use of 2 immigration jails accused of mistreatment

By **BEN FOX** and **KATE BRUMBACK**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A detention facility in Georgia where women claim they were subjected to unwanted medical procedures and a Massachusetts jail that has drawn complaints of inhumane conditions will no longer be used to detain immigrants, the Biden administration said Thursday.

The Department of Homeland Security said it would terminate contracts with the local government agency that runs the detention center in North Dartmouth, Massachusetts, and with the private operator of the Irwin County Detention Center in Georgia. Any detainees the U.S. believes should remain in custody will be transferred elsewhere, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in announcing the move, which had been sought by immigrant advocates.

"Allow me to state one foundational principle," Mayorkas said, "We will not tolerate the mistreatment of individuals in civil immigration detention or substandard conditions of detention."



In this May 12, 2021 photo, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testifies before the Senate Appropriations committee hearing, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

Mayorkas said ending the use of the facilities is part of an effort to make "lasting improvements" to a detention system that advocates have long argued detains people for civil immigration offenses for too long and in inappropriately harsh conditions.

It also reflects a broader effort to roll back the anti-immigrant policies that characterized U.S. policy under President Donald Trump.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a part of DHS, holds about 19,000 noncitizens for removal at about 200 facilities around the country, down about a quarter from a year earlier. About 73 percent of those in custody have no criminal record and many others have only minor offenses, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a data-gathering organization

at Syracuse University.

DHS suggested additional detention facilities could close in a statement that noted that it would "review concerns" about other centers.

"Today's announcements show the Biden administration's willingness to decisively break from the immigrants' rights abuses of prior administrations," said Naureen Shah, senior advocacy and policy counsel

at the American Civil Liberties Union, which recently called for the closure of 39 immigration detention centers around the country.

The ACLU has called for an end to the "default incarceration" of immigrants and an end to the agreements with state and local authorities that enable prisoners who are noncitizens to be transferred into ICE custody for deportation upon release.

Mayorkas has led an effort to soften some immigration policies but has insisted that noncitizens who pose a threat to the public and have committed serious crimes should be detained pending their removal from the country.

The Bristol County Sheriff's Office operated the Massachusetts immigration detention center jail under an agreement with DHS. The Georgia facility was run by a private company under contract with the government.

Members of Congress and advocates have called for the closure of the Georgia facility since last year after women held there told of being forced into unnecessary gynecological procedures amid unsanitary conditions. □

Feds seize 68 big cats from 'Tiger King Park' in Oklahoma



In this Wednesday, Aug. 28, 2013, file photo, one of the tigers living at the Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park is pictured at the park in Wynnewood, Okla.

Associated Press

THACKERVILLE, Okla. (AP) — Federal authorities have seized 68 big cats from an animal park in Oklahoma featured in Netflix's "Tiger King."

The U.S. Department of Justice announced Thursday that the seizure of the federally protected lions, tigers, lion-tiger hybrids and a jaguar as part of a

court-approved agreement to resolve a DOJ complaint against Jeffrey and Lauren Lowe over the animals' care.

The civil complaint, filed in November, accused the Lowes of recurring inhumane treatment and improper handling of animals protected by the Endangered Species Act. The couple has received numerous citations for failing to properly care for the animals following three inspections of the Tiger King Park in Thackerville since December 2020.

During a hearing last week, a judge found the couple in contempt for failing to comply with court orders to employ a qualified veterinarian and establish a program of veterinary

care for the animals. Daniel Card, an attorney for the couple, told a federal judge that the Lowes "want out completely."

"They don't want to fight this anymore. They don't want to do it," Card told the judge.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicholas McQuaid said in a statement that the DOJ is working to ensure the animals are sent to "responsible animal preserves where they can be safely maintained rather than exploited."

Former Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson, who now co-chairs the National Law Enforcement Council for Animal Wellness Action, a group that endorses policies to prevent animal cru-

elty, said the seizure punctuates a long series of federal actions to shut down an "unethical roadside zoo operator."

"Joe Exotic and Jeff Lowe ran slipshod operations and the chickens have come home to roost," Edmondson said.

Jeffrey Lowe was a central figure in "Tiger King" that featured a mullet-wearing zookeeper named Joe Exotic and became a cultural phenomenon last year. Joe Exotic, a pseudonym for Joseph Maldonado-Passage, is serving a 22-year sentence in federal prison in Texas for his 2020 conviction on charges that he participated in a murder-for-hire plot and violated federal wildlife laws. □

Israel, Hamas agree to cease-fire to end bloody 11-day war

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and
FARES AKRAM

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel and Hamas announced a cease-fire Thursday, ending a bruising 11-day war that caused widespread destruction in the Gaza Strip and brought life in much of Israel to a standstill.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel accepted the Egyptian proposal after a late-night meeting of his Security Cabinet. Hamas quickly followed suit and said it would honor the deal.

Egypt's state-run MENA news agency said the truce would take effect at 2 a.m., roughly three hours after the announcement.

In a statement, Netanyahu's office said the Security Cabinet unanimously approved the proposal after recommendations from the military chief of staff and other top defense officials. The statement boasted of "significant achievements in the operation, some of which are unprecedented" and included a veiled threat against Hamas.

"The political leaders emphasized that the reality



Rockets are launched from the Gaza Strip towards Israel, in Gaza City, Thursday, May 20, 2021.

Associated Press

on the ground will determine the future of the campaign," the statement said. Taher Nounou, a Hamas official, confirmed the deal.

"The Palestinian resistance will commit itself to this deal as long as the occupation is committed," he said.

The agreement would close the heaviest round of fighting between the bitter enemies since a 50-day war in 2014, and once again there was no clear winner. Israel inflicted heavy dam-

age on Hamas but was unable to prevent the rocket fire that has disrupted life for millions of Israelis for more than a decade.

The fighting began May 10, when Hamas militants in Gaza fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem after days of clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a flashpoint site that is known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary and to

Jews as the Temple Mount. Heavy-handed police tactics at the compound and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers had inflamed tensions.

Israel launched hundreds of airstrikes during the operation, targeting what it said was Hamas' military infrastructure, including a vast tunnel network. Hamas and other militant groups embedded in residential areas fired over 4,000 rockets at

Israeli cities, with hundreds falling short and most of the rest intercepted.

At least 230 Palestinians were killed, including 65 children and 39 women, with 1,710 people wounded, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not break the numbers down into fighters and civilians.

Hamas and the militant group Islamic Jihad said at least 20 of their fighters were killed, while Israel said the number was at least 130. Some 58,000 Palestinians have fled their homes, many of them seeking shelter in crowded U.N. schools at a time of a raging coronavirus outbreak.

Twelve people in Israel, including a 5-year-old boy, a 16-year-old girl and a soldier, were also killed.

Since the fighting began, Gaza's infrastructure, already weakened by a 14-year blockade, has rapidly deteriorated.

Medical supplies, water and fuel for electricity are running low in the territory, on which Israel and Egypt imposed the blockade after Hamas seized power in 2007. □

Ontario allows for golf and announces a staged reopening

By ROB GILLIES

TORONTO (AP) — Ontario's premier announced plans Thursday to again allow golf, tennis and other outdoor recreational activities beginning this weekend and said there will be a staged reopening of Canada's largest province starting next month.

Premier Doug Ford said Ontario is able to loosen pandemic restrictions because coronavirus infections and hospitalizations are in decline while vaccinations increase.

New coronavirus cases have fallen in recent days in Ontario, with more than 2,400 cases reported Thursday, while Canada's government expects to have 65% of the country's eligible adults vaccinated with at least one dose by the end of May.

Canada is about to over-

take the U.S. in percentage of people with at least one dose, but Canada has only fully vaccinated about 3% of the population because health officials decided to delay the second dose to get more people a first dose level of protection faster. Second doses are expected to be administered for most adults in June and July in Canada. Ford said outdoor recreation can resume Saturday. He banned golf and tennis last month during a surge of coronavirus cases, making Ontario the only jurisdiction in North America where golf was not allowed. He did withdraw restrictions that closed playgrounds amid criticism from health officials and others on the health importance of outdoor recreation.

The premier also announced a timeline for

a stepped resumption of economic and other activities. But he said no decision has been made on whether schools should reopen before the current term ends, saying there are different opinions among his health advisers.

"I'm not going to rush into this," Ford said.

Under current pandemic measures, retail stores in Ontario are open only for curbside pickup, while gyms and restaurants — including those with outdoor patios — are closed. Most nonessential workers are working from home, and Toronto, Canada's largest city and financial capital, has largely been on lockdown for six months.

Ford said step one of the reopening plan is expected to begin the week of June 14 and will see some non-essential retail busi-



A closed Lakeview Golf Course facility is shown during the COVID-19 pandemic in Mississauga, Ontario, on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

Associated Press

nesses reopen with a limit of 15% capacity. Outdoor restaurant dining will be allowed with no more than four people together, and outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people will be permitted.

The second stage will allow outdoor gatherings of up to 25 people and the resumption of personal care services where masks can be worn. Indoor religious services will restart, with capacity limits of 15%. □

Ukraine's leader fears U.S. making deal with Russia

By YURAS KARMANAU

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) —

Ukraine's leader voiced fear Thursday that the U.S. could strike a deal with Russia behind his country's back, and rebuked France and Germany for a perceived softening of their stance in talks with Moscow.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy specifically warned Washington that its failure to block the construction of a Russian-built natural gas pipeline to Germany would be a grave political error.

"It would be a loss for the United States, and I believe it would be President Biden's personal loss," Zelenskyy said at a news conference. "It would mark a serious geopolitical victory for the Russian Federation and a new redistribution of spheres of influence."

Zelenskyy's undiplomatic comments reflected Ukrainian concern that the completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline bypassing its territory would deprive it of transit fees for pumping the Russian gas to Europe, erode its strategic importance and weaken it politically.

The U.S. has strongly opposed the construction of the new Russian pipeline, but the Biden administra-



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy gestures while speaking to the media during a news conference with the world's largest airplane, Ukrainian Antonov An-225 Mriya in the background at the Antonov aircraft factory in Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday, May 20, 2021.

Associated Press

tion opted Wednesday not to punish the German company overseeing the project while announcing the new sanctions against Russian companies and ships. The Kremlin hailed it as a "positive signal" before a possible Biden's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Russia and Ukraine have been locked in a tense tug-of-war ever since Moscow annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in March 2014 following the ouster of the

country's former Kremlin-friendly president and threw its weight behind separatist rebels in Ukraine's east.

Zelenskyy said that even though U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has assured him during a visit earlier this month that Washington would first consult Kyiv on any Ukraine-related issues before it discusses them with Russia, he is still deeply worried.

"Are there risks that some issues will be raised despite

our agreements?" he said. "Yes, I'm sure that there are such risks. I'll be frank with you, I'm scared by this situation."

More than 14,000 people have died in seven years of fighting in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland called Donbas.

A 2015 peace deal brokered by France and Germany helped end large-scale battles, but regular skirmishes have continued along the tense line of contact in the east and politi-

cal settlement efforts have stalled.

Last month, increasing violations of a cease-fire in the east and a major Russian troop buildup near Ukraine stoked Ukrainian and Western fears of renewed hostilities. Moscow says it has withdrawn its forces after sweeping maneuvers, but Zelenskyy said Thursday that many Russian troops have remained near Ukraine.

The Ukrainian president also said that France and Germany recently have been too soft on Russia.

"I feel their support, but I believe that it should be stronger," he said. "They are aware of my thoughts, I have been very frank with them. I believe that they have recently weakened their positions a bit."

The 2015 peace deal signed in Minsk, Belarus, obliged Ukraine to offer broad autonomy to the separatist regions and a sweeping amnesty for the rebels. It also stipulated that Ukraine would regain full control of its border with Russia in the rebel-held territories only after the election of local leaders and legislatures — provisions resented by many Ukrainians as a betrayal of national interests. □

U.S., Russia hold parallel military drills in the Balkans



In this photo provided by the Serbian Defense Ministry, Russian and Serbian soldiers perform during exercise in Deliblatska Pescara, a large sand area, 70 kilometers north-west of Belgrade, Serbia.

Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Serbia and Russia launched joint military exercises near

Serbia's capital Thursday as U.S.-led forces held massive drills in neighboring Balkan

states in what appeared to be Moscow's resolve to maintain influence in the European region torn by wars during the 1990s.

The Serbian and Russian defense ministries said the joint training of some 200 special troops will include "the destruction of an illegal military formation," live ammunition shooting and "anti-terrorist" action. The drills will last through May 25, the ministries said.

The exercises at a training ground near Belgrade comes as large-scale U.S. Army-led drills dubbed DEFENDER-Europe 2021 are held across Europe, including in most of the nations that neighbor Serbia.

The U.S. Army has said that

the joint exercises which include approximately 28,000 multinational troops are "designed to build readiness and interoperability between U.S., NATO and partner militaries."

The exercises, which include air and missile defense assets, "demonstrates our ability to serve as a strategic security partner in the western Balkans and Black Sea regions while sustaining our abilities in northern Europe, the Caucasus, Ukraine and Africa," the U.S. military has said.

Serbia, which is a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace outreach program and is formally seeking European Union membership, has been forging

close military, economic and political ties with both Russia and China. Serbia remains the only Russian ally in the region that was torn by bloody civil wars in the 1990s. Most of Serbia's neighbors belong to NATO and Moscow has openly opposed their membership in the Western military alliance, claiming the eastern European region is its traditional sphere of influence. Serbian Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin said Thursday that Russia is "a great security partner."

"We are jointly thinking of how to preserve our countries because Serbia and Russia can be broken only from within, not from the outside," Vulin said. □

Mexican president draws U.S. into dispute over governor

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico has made little headway defusing a bizarre standoff over the possible arrest of a sitting state governor facing charges of tax evasion, money laundering and organized crime. But President Andrés Manuel López Obrador made one thing clear Thursday: Any diplomatic documents the United States sends to Mexico are at risk of being published by the president himself.

So eager is López Obrador to see the governor arrested that he displayed a copy of a May 4 letter sent by the U.S. Embassy's legal attaché asking for information on Garcia Cabeza de Vaca as part of a U.S. money laundering investigation.

And the president said he'd do it again, even though such documents might contain sensitive information.

"Just so everyone knows, if my administration gets a document, with all the implications it might have ... independently of whether it legally correct or not, I am going to make public right now a letter sent by the United States Embassy," the president said at his daily morning press conference.

Mexico is already facing questions about the clar-



In this June 7, 2018 file photo, U.S. Border Patrol Sector Chief for the Rio Grande Valley Manuel Padilla Jr., center, shakes hands with Tamaulipas Gov. Francisco Garcia Cabeza de Vaca, during a news conference at the Hidalgo-Reynosa International Bridge in Hidalgo, Texas.

Associated Press

ity of its legal system, and doubts about whether the U.S. can continue to share intelligence with Mexican officials. But this week's dispute over border state Gov. Francisco Garcia Cabeza de Vaca threatens to do damage on both fronts. A disagreement between courts, prosecutors and state and federal legislatures make it unclear whether the Tamaulipas state governor can be ar-

rested, or whether he still enjoys immunity from prosecution as an elected official.

The federal Congress dominated by the president's Morena party has voted to remove his immunity. The state legislature dominated by the opposition refused to recognize that, and the Supreme Court has refused to step into the dispute. It raises the possibility that if Garcia Cabeza de

Vaca leaves Tamaulipas, he might face arrest; or if federal agents try to arrest him inside Tamaulipas, they could face resistance from the sizable state police force.

López Obrador suggested on Thursday drawing a fourth entity, the Senate, into the dispute, although its powers in this case are also unclear.

Federal prosecutors said Wednesday they had ob-

tained an arrest warrant and the governor's bank accounts have been frozen.

The governor is a prominent figure in Mexico's embattled conservative opposition, which claims the charges against him amount to political persecution. López Obrador says it is a classic case of the corruption he has promised to root out.

But publishing the U.S. request for legal assistance takes the dispute to a new level.

Despite diplomatic protocols that usually regard such letters as confidential — and Mexico's own confidentiality laws that prohibit naming suspects unless they are convicted.

Along with the governor, the letter named at least 20 other individuals and companies, though it is unclear whether they have been charged. Technically in Mexico, releasing files from an ongoing case or investigation is itself a crime.

The president acknowledged that his own legal team had previously discouraged him from releasing such files, but said he had to do it to avoid Mexico becoming "the laughingstock" of other nations for not doing enough to combat money laundering. □

Hopes fade for 26 missing after barge sinks in India storm

By **ASHOK SHARMA**
Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Rescuers recovered 12 more bodies on Thursday as hopes faded for 26 people still missing after a barge with 261 onboard sank off Mumbai when a powerful cyclone lashed the region this week, officials said.

The last of 186 survivors were rescued on Wednesday, and since then navy rescuers using five warships, a surveillance aircraft and three helicopters have found only floating bodies, navy spokesman Cmdr. Mehul Karnik said.

A total of 49 bodies have now been recovered since the search was launched

Monday, he said. Most of the survivors and bodies have arrived in Mumbai, he said.

Indrajeet Singh, a survivor, recalled that everyone on the large barge rushed to the deck sensing danger during the storm. Water gushed into the barge and it started tilting, The Hindustan Times newspaper quoted him as saying.

"I had no other option except jumping into the sea to save my life," he said.

The survivors bobbed up and down in life jackets for up to eight hours before they were picked up by rescuers, he said.

Cyclone Tauktae packed sustained winds of up to

210 kilometers (130 miles) per hour, leaving more than 50 dead in Gujarat and Maharashtra states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inspected the damage from the air on Wednesday, promising government assistance.

Officials said more than 16,000 houses were damaged in Gujarat and thousands of trees and electric poles were uprooted.

In another operation, a navy helicopter rescued 35 crew members on another barge which ran aground north of Mumbai, the government said.

Both barges were working for Oil and Natural Gas Corp., the largest crude oil



Fishermen inspect a fishing boat wrecked in a powerful storm that lashed the region this week in Mumbai, Maharashtra state, India, Thursday, May 20, 2021.

Associated Press

and natural gas company in India.

The company said the ves-

sels were carrying personnel deployed for offshore drilling. □

LOCAL



Medlab Aruba 'fit-2-fly': Covid-19 testing on the island

NOORD — While on vacation, the last thing you need to worry about is what to do or where to go for your COVID-19 testing. Many countries, including the U.S. require for all passengers heading back home to present with a negative test result for PCR or Antigen 72 hours prior to departure.

MEDLAB Aruba is an ac-

credited ISO 15189:2012 OGA-LE 23-08 laboratory with over 30 years of experience on the island. The laboratory complies with the Department of Public Health of Aruba, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requirements for COVID-19 testing. MEDLAB Aruba has been assigned as one of the private laboratories

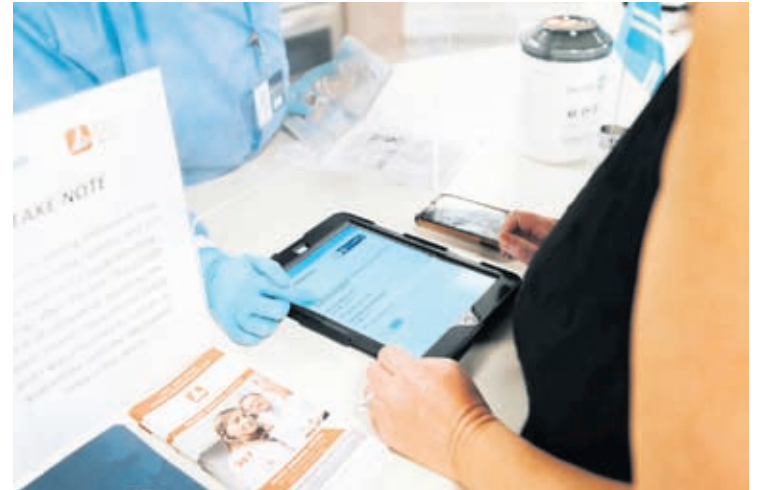
authorized to perform "Fit-2-Fly" testing for departing passengers.

Hassle free scheduling – QR-code

The laboratory has invested on the only fully integrated digital booking platform on the island that allows guests to pre-register for the testing prior to coming to Aruba and have all their information incorporated upon entry to any of the available testing centers. Guests will receive a confirmation email with QR-code that will be requested upon day of testing to facilitate a faster turn-around time for your results.

Testing options

Offering three method of testing gives you, our island visitors, the possibility to choose which service is at your convenience. Recom-



mended time to complete test prior to departure is 48 (72) hours. We also request for you to bring your passport to the appointment. Testing Option 1: Walk-In service at our location in Noord Medical Center (NMC), Noord 63 or at Superfood COVID Testing Center. You may also book online at WWW.COVIDA-RUBA.COM and choose location.

Testing Option 2: On-site at participating hotels. Only guests staying on these properties will be allowed to conduct the test. Appointment is also made online at WWW.COVIDA-RUBA.COM.

The participating hotels with testing facilities are Aruba Marriott Resort (Stellaris, Ocean and Surf Club), Holiday Inn, Playa Linda Beach Resort, RIU Antillas, RIU Palace, Eagle Resort, Costa Linda Beach Resort, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Manchebo Beach Resort, Casa del Mar & Aruba Beach Club, Caribbean

Palm Village.

Testing Option 3: Airbnb/ Other hotel location. We come to you for the test together with our vehicular Mobile Health Test Unit. We require a minimum of six people for this service. Request/ Book appointment through WhatsApp number +297 5975548.

Price

Offering a great rate for the testing. The Antigen test is at \$50 and the PCR at \$100. Payment method is card (preferred), cash (hygiene measures).

The COVID Test is not covered by the Aruba Visitor's Insurance, but you are able to seek reimbursement once back home.

Results

Turn-around time for results is within 24 hours. Result is sent electronically to your email (check spam/ junk folder)

For more information visit www.covidaruba.com, call us at +297 5975548 or email us at covid@lab.aw.



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The taste of New England with Caribbean flair

ORANJESTAD — One thing is for certain: Chef Scott Scheuerman and his team are famous for getting people hooked, just like the fish on your plate. You will get the taste of home fused with Caribbean while dining in elegance. Scheuerman will tell how Aqua Grill established its name since opening in 2002, and why it reaped accolades from such prestigious travel publications as Fodor's, who says, "This hip restaurant is heaven on earth for seafood lovers, who will find fresh fish galore..." Now is your chance to taste Aqua Grill's NEW seasonal menu and create a lifetime culinary memory.

'A Scheuer thing'

Secretly, we all know that the success of a restaurant begins in the kitchen. That is where the chef creates his magic and for Aqua Grill the culinary team has won an assortment of awards for their continuous delivery of 'haute-cuisine del mar.' Classic seafood is mingled with contemporary ideas resulting in surprising dishes that soon made the restaurant a must-dine, confirmed by established travel media

specialists like Fodor's and Frommer's.

American-born Scheuerman, executive chef of Aqua Grill, is thrilled about 'his restaurant'. "We started out as a New England style seafood restaurant, patterned after Boston style. But we quickly blended into some Caribbean, local flair... if you will. We do still offer the traditional New England dishes like whole Maine lobster, northern seafood plates like the salmon, tuna and swordfish. We buy also from the local fisherman to offer Caribbean dishes like snapper and grouper which are number one sellers in our restaurant being the most prevalent local fishes. Catches like wahoo, mahi mahi and brasil are welcome too, anything that comes out of the water we embrace."

Fresh import from Boston

Aqua Grill flies in their own shipments on a weekly basis mostly from Boston because the price quality balance is the best, says the chef. "We are unique in this. Number one priority is buying fresh, we mean not frozen. Our original concept is New England seafood

and we stick to that concept. They have a wonderful assortment of oysters and lobsters as well." Aqua Grill also offers international fusion type of menu items; actually all you wish for is there. A very balanced menu awaits you. "And we have options for meat lovers and vegetarians/vegans too. We, however, do not mix it up too much because we believe we do not want to lose our identity as a seafood restaurant," Scheuerman adds.

NEW! Sublime seasonal menu

Now is the time to indulge in Aqua Grill's dinner experience. The established restaurant offers a sensational seasonal menu. We present to you a fresh Oyster Bar selection: French Kiss (Prince Edward Island), Irish Point (Prince Edward Island) and Billingsgate Lighthouse (Massachusetts) or West Bay (Massachusetts) and Duxbury (Massachusetts).

After that continue your gastronomic trip to heaven with an appetizer like Tuna Tataki, seasoned yellowfin tuna flash-seared and sliced with ponzu and presented raw with wakame, wasabi and sweet pickled ginger or Grilled Oysters with butter, fennel and leeks. You haven't reached your destination yet because the main course options will blow you away: Blackened Brazil, locally caught amberjack fillet blackened and presented with sweet potato, asparagus and served with sweet and spicy red pepper compote or Broiled



Lobster Tail, 12 oz Caribbean lobster tail with zucchini-potato roll and jardiniere vegetables. In all honesty, how can you resist this? Take a pick out of Aqua Grill's delicious desserts to finally conclude: yes, this beats it all. We will be back for more.

About the place

The glow of Aqua Grill is obvious by entering the restaurant. The eclectic of a modern and a traditional New England fish house style appeal and the open-view kitchen adds to the thrill. It's clear as water; for sublime seafood in Aruba go to the island's premier seafood restaurant: Aqua Grill. This seafood-heaven place is already a statement for years with a consistency in upscale dining and top-shelf service. If you like to savor your seafood, this is your dive in. We promise you will get hooked. □

Aqua Grill

J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 374

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AQUA GRILL

Money supply expanded

ORANJESTAD — Compared to January 2021, money supply increased in February 2021 by Afl. 42.2 million to Afl. 4,818.6 million, resulting from an expansion in both net domestic assets (+Afl. 26.8 million) and net foreign assets (+Afl. 15.3 million).

The increase in the domestic component of money supply was caused by a surge in domestic credit (+Afl. 34.8 million). The non-credit related balance sheet items decreased by Afl. 8.0 million. The rise in domestic credit was attributed to an expansion in the net claims of the banking sector on the public sec-

tor (+Afl. 66.3 million) and a contraction in the claims of the banking sector on the private sector (-Afl. 31.5 million). The growth in the net claims of the banking sector on the public sector was caused by decreases in government deposits (-Afl. 106.2 million) and gross claims (-Afl. 39.9 million). The decline in the claims of the banking sector on the private sector was the result of lower loans to enterprises (-Afl. 23.7 million), consumer credit (-Afl. 9.7 million), and an increase in housing mortgages (+Afl. 1.9 million). The net foreign assets of the banking sector increased, due to a net purchase of foreign ex-

change of Afl. 140.2 million from the public, mostly related to foreign exchange revenue from tourism exports and net transfers from foreign accounts. These were largely offset by a net sale of foreign exchange of Afl. 124.9 million to the public, mainly associated with payments for goods imports and other services.

Inflation

The consumer price index (CPI) for February 2021 noted a 1.9 percent decrease year over year (YOY) compared to a 2.7 percent decrease (YOY) for January 2021. The main contributors to this decrease were "Recreation and Cul-

ture", "Household Operation", and "Transport". The 12-month average inflation rate was -2.2 percent in February 2021, compared to -1.8 percent in January 2021.

Government

Total government revenue amounted to Afl. 62.6 million in February 2021, Afl. 41.4 million less than the same month of the previous year. The decline in government revenue resulted from decreases in tax revenues (-Afl. 40.5 million) and non-tax revenue (-Afl. 0.9 million). The reduction on tax revenue was caused primarily by decreases in income

from wage tax (-Afl. 7.7 million), transfer tax (-Afl. 7.2 million), turnover tax (-Afl. 6.1 million), and motor vehicle fees (-Afl. 5.9 million).

Tourism

The number of stay over visitors amounted to 31,982 in February 2021, which is 63,305 less visitors (-64.4 percent) than in February 2020. This decline was due to a reduction in all the markets. The North American market, the Latin American market and the European market decreased by 53,216 visitors (-65.6 percent), 4,150 visitors (-76.4 percent), and 5,018 visitors (-71.7 percent), respectively. □

The history of Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Many of our visitors consider our One Happy Island as their home away from home, so we thought it is a good idea for you to know the history of Aruba. Here's our story in a nutshell.

What's in a name

Most probably, the name Aruba is of Indian origin, a combination of ora (shell) and oubao (island). But it might also be from Spanish: oro hubo (there was gold). The earliest mention on a map spells Orua.

The pre-Columbian era

Before the discovery of Aruba by the Spaniards, the island was inhabited by Indians, first by the Arawaks and later the Caribs. They lived of catching fish and collecting natural food.

The Spaniards, the Dutch and the English

Aruba was discovered by the Spaniards in 1499. In the 16th century, the Spaniards deported the entire Indian population and sent them away to the island of Hispaniola to work in copper mines. In the 17th century, the Dutch conquered the Windward islands. On Aruba horses and mainly goats were bred. Between 1806 and 1816, Aruba was occupied by the English.

Aloe, gold and phosphate

De aloe plant was particularly suitable for the soil and the climate of Aruba. As of the 19th century, the juice is exported and since 1947 there is an aloe factory on Aruba. In 1824, gold was found on Aruba and phosphate in 1859. Both indus-

tries were the first important source of income for the Aruban people. De gold digging continued up to the First World War (1914) and the exploitation of phosphate was also halted in the beginning of the 20th century.

The Lago

The most important change in the past century for Aruba was the establishment of the Lago Oil and Transport Company. The founding of this refinery prompted the need of foreign labor and they came mainly from the English speaking islands in the Caribbean. They established themselves in San Nicolas. In 1986, the outdated Lago closed but the refinery was soon reopened by another oil company.



Aruba and World War II

Aruba was home to one of the biggest refineries in the world, supplying a substantial part of the fuel to the allied troops. That's why the island was targeted by a German submarine. Fortunately, the attack was a major failure. Aruba had been spared massive damage

Striving for Separation

In the beginning of the thirties of the past century, Aruba officially announced to the Government of the Dutch Kingdom its wish to separate from Curaçao. Jan Hendrik (Henny) Eman and Shon A Eman were the advocates of 'Separación' (separation).

The struggle for 'Status Aparte'

In the course of the seventies, a movement came about that aimed to dissolve Aruba from the administrative unit of the Netherlands Antilles. After a couple of turbulent weeks in August 1977, the call for independence was recognized by the Dutch government,

which resulted in obtaining the so-called 'Status Aparte': in 1986, Aruba became an independent country within the Dutch Kingdom.

Betico Croes

The young and dynamic politician Gilberto François ('Betico') Croes from Santa Cruz founded the political party Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo (MEP) in 1971. As leader of this party, he was an advocate of the realization of the 'Status Aparte' for Aruba in the seventies and eighties. He died in the year the Status Aparte took effect, 1986

Tourism

In 1959, the first major resort on Palm Beach was constructed. Next to the Aruba Caribbean Hotel, other so-called High-rise hotels were built. Several smaller hotels were built as well, like those on Eagle Beach. Tourism has grown to become the major employer on the island, next to the refinery. Source: <http://www.historiadiaruba.aw/>. □

Millennial Money: Should you become your own boss?

By **AMRITA JAYAKUMAR** of **NerdWallet**

Maybe you're cringing at the thought of going back to an office. The seed of a business idea floats around in your head between work videoconference calls, after the kids are asleep or while you tend your pandemic garden. Or perhaps you were laid off during the pandemic and forced to work for yourself, and now you're wondering if you should continue down this path.

"In 2020, there was an explosion in new business applications, reaching nearly 4.5 million by year's end," according to a February report by the Economic Innovation Group, a Washington, D.C., think tank. That's an increase of 24.3% from 2019 and was the highest on record — 51% higher than the average from 2010 to 2019.

"COVID-19 was a social, cultural and emotional shock the likes of which we have not experienced for generations. Becoming an entrepreneur is a deeply personal decision, and the pandemic may have delivered the push for many to embrace it," the report said. Deciding if self-employment is right for you depends on your personality,



In this Sept. 2, 2020 file photo, a passer-by walks past a business storefront with a space for rent sign in a window in Boston.

Associated Press

your financial situation and your ability to adapt. Here are tips from people who became their own bosses.

SEE IF YOU'RE RIGHT FOR THE JOB

Many of us now appreciate the flexibility of working from home. As a freelancer or independent contractor, you would have the power to set your own schedule.

"Being in charge is very, very attractive to many people," says Keith Hall, president and CEO of the National Association for the Self-Employed, or NASE, a

resource and advocacy group. "The other side of that coin is that when you are in charge of your own destiny, you are also responsible for it."

Evaluate your abilities as a prospective employer.

"Freelancers need to be self-motivated, work well independently, be organized, learn how to market their services well and be comfortable with a certain level of uncertainty," CEO Sara Sutton said by email. She runs two companies focused on remote and

flexible job opportunities: FlexJobs, a job search site, and Remote.co, which provides resources for companies considering remote work.

Hall suggests asking yourself if you have the motivation to be in charge of your own destiny. "If you wake up Monday morning and decide to stay in bed late, that's a financial loss. Nobody is going to be standing over you making you get out of your bed."

MAKE A PLAN THAT FITS YOUR FINANCES

Before deciding whether to freelance, become a consultant or turn your side hustle into a business, take a close look at your finances. Many cobbled together a budget during the pandemic. Revisit that plan to make sure you understand your hard costs, such as food, rent and day care. (The 50/30/20 approach is a quick way to divide your dollars into three buckets: needs, wants and savings.) Isolate what you can put toward a business. Small costs like purchasing a domain name, buying the premium version of a software or membership fees for a networking group can add up.

Use your budget to set short- and long-term business goals, Hall says. "Know exactly what you need to earn to meet your family goals and translate that into a time schedule."

EVALUATE YOUR TIMING

You may need to keep your day job for a while, but you can still build your business muscle.

"Being an entrepreneur was never a goal for me," says Afenya Montgomery, founder and CEO of iCAN Collective, a creative workspace and event venue for women entrepreneurs of color in Chicago. □

Dutch court orders former Nissan boss Ghosn to repay salary

AMSTERDAM (AP) — A Dutch court on Thursday rejected fugitive auto executive Carlos Ghosn's wrongful dismissal claim against an Amsterdam-based alliance between Nissan and Mitsubishi and ordered him to repay nearly 5 million euros (\$6 million) salary he received in 2018.

Ghosn vowed to appeal.

The ruling came in a case in which Ghosn sought to have his 2018 sacking from Nissan-Mitsubishi B.V. overturned and demanded 15 million euros (\$16.5 million) in compensation.

The court in Amsterdam rejected his claims, saying he did not have a valid con-

tract with the company at the time. The salary he was ordered to repay covers payments made to him by the Dutch joint venture from April until November 2018.

"As today's verdict has been rendered without hearing Mr. Ghosn and other key witnesses, the defense team will now take the case to the court of appeal where Mr. Ghosn's right to witness evidence will be granted," a spokesman for Ghosn said in a written statement. "We are satisfied with the court verdict which ruled out any bad faith from Mr. Ghosn."

The Dutch case stems from Nissan's decision to fire

Ghosn after he was accused of financial misconduct in Japan. The former high-flying automotive executive skipped bail in Tokyo in 2019 and fled to Lebanon, where he grew up.

Ghosn, who was first arrested in November 2018, has said he is innocent of allegations in Japan that he under-reported his future income and committed a breach of trust by diverting Nissan money for his personal gain. He says the compensation was never decided on or received, and the Nissan payments were for legitimate business purposes.

Ghosn, who has French, Brazilian and Lebanese



In this Sept. 29, 2020, file photo, former Nissan Motor Co. Chairman Carlos Ghosn holds a press conference at the Maronite Christian Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, as he launches an initiative to help Lebanon that is undergoing a severe economic and financial crisis, in Kaslik, north of Beirut, Lebanon.

Associated Press

citizenship, was sent by Renault in 1999 to salvage Nissan, which makes the

Leaf electric car and Infiniti luxury models, from the brink of bankruptcy. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

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5-21

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-21

CRYPTOQUOTE

Q S I B O M U Q V U K M D B M Y S V B N

U M U A O G Y — G F B B Q K .

V O Q Q O C A Q K U C N V O Y W S X Y

B I Z B E Y U Y O S C . — Q B S

D X M E U A Q O U

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: ALL HUMAN WISDOM IS SUMMED UP IN TWO WORDS; WAIT AND HOPE. — ALEXANDRE DUMAS



A Waymo minivan arrives to pick up passengers for an autonomous vehicle ride, Wednesday, April 7, 2021, in Mesa, Ariz.

Associated Press

Cool tech, crazy turns: A reporter's take on driverless cars

By JACQUES BILLEAUD
Associated Press

CHANDLER, Ariz. (AP) — The annoyed shopper paced around and knocked on the windows of a minivan blocking him from leaving his Costco parking spot. He didn't seem to notice, or care, that there was no one inside. A colleague and I had called for the Waymo ride — our first in a fully driverless vehicle — and quickly encountered a hiccup: figuring out how to tell it to meet us at the curb. We ended up spotting the minivan across the bustling parking lot, and hurried over. As we pulled away, the shopper raised his arm and extended his middle finger.

Welcome to the United States' first large-scale ride-hailing service with no backup drivers, which Waymo recently launched in suburban Phoenix.

An AP photographer and I took it for a spin and discovered some impressive technology. Waymo's minivans skillfully adhere to traffic laws and can detect people, vehicles and objects from several hundred yards away.

But amid the advances lurk challenges that developers face as they race to bring autonomous cars to the

masses: adapting the machinery to human behavior — and getting passengers to feel at ease without a person behind the wheel. "The technology is great, but the experience isn't there yet," said Andrew Maynard, a professor at Arizona State University's College of Global Futures who studies the social and ethical aspects of autonomous vehicles and other emerging technologies. Waymo, a unit of Google parent Alphabet Inc., is one of several companies testing driverless vehicles in the U.S. But it's the first offering lifts to the public with no human in the driver's seat who can take over in sticky situations.

During our rides, the minivans slowed for speed bumps and carried out a textbook right-on-red turn. Most impressive was a careful maneuver at a green light where a woman with a walker stood dangerously close to the corner.

But customers in crowded parking lots might find it hard to pinpoint pickup locations without drivers who can call, text or simply watch for them.

A Waymo minivan also made an aggressive turn at a green light that we would have never taken. Another failed to go the requested

location, dropping us off about a four-minute walk away.

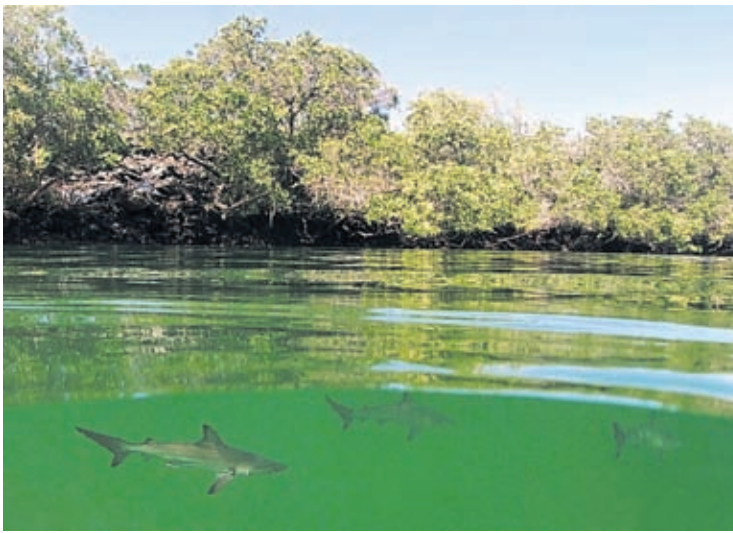
And watching the wheel turn by itself was, well, eerie.

The company said it is listening closely to customer feedback and acknowledges it needs to improve passenger pickups. It also said it's working to set the proper expectations with riders, and has launched a campaign that provides tips.

Automakers and tech companies were moving quickly to put self-driving vehicles in action in 2018, but a fatal crash involving an Uber test vehicle in Tempe slowed development.

Only recently did the industry show signs of recovery. Still, most experts believe there won't be widespread use for another five years or so, and autonomous vehicles won't be in every major city until at least late this decade.

Waymo started offering autonomous rides to a limited number of customers during 2019 in an early testing program in Arizona. Last fall, it opened its ride-hailing program to anyone seeking a ride within its 50-square-mile (129-square-kilometer) service area covering parts of Chandler, Tempe and Mesa. □



This Feb. 25, 2019 photo provided by the Galapagos National Park shows a hammerhead shark nursery which was recently discovered in Santa Cruz, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador.

Associated Press

CHRISTINA LARSON

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Roughly a sixth of the planet's land and freshwater area now lies within protected or conservation areas, according to a United Nations report released Wednesday.

Next comes the hard part. The world needs to ensure that those regions are actually effectively managed to stabilize the climate and to curb biodiversity loss while also increasing the total area of protected places, scientists say.

"Protected and conserved areas play a crucial role in tackling biodiversity loss," said Neville Ash, director of the U.N. Environment

Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, which produced the report. But simply drawing lines on a map isn't enough. Conservation areas "need to be effectively managed and equitably governed," he said.

The "Protected Planet" report also found that about 8% of coastal and ocean waters are within protected areas.

"There has been a substantial increase in the protection of marine ecosystems in the past decade. But the protection of land areas hasn't increased as much in that time," said Stuart Pimm, an ecologist at Duke University, who was not in-

Protected areas cover a sixth of Earth's land and freshwater

volved in the report. "What we really need to know about is the quality of the protected areas — not just the quantity of square miles," Pimm added.

"It is nowhere near enough," said Charles Barber, senior biodiversity advisor for the World Resources Institute, who was not involved in the report. "We need to conserve half of the Earth if we are going to maintain the basic biological operating system" of the planet. Several scientific and environmental groups are now calling for 30% or 50% of the planet to be protected. Earlier this month, President Joe Biden set a goal of conserving at least 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.

"There's plenty of scientific evidence that protected areas are the cornerstone of biodiversity protection and climate stabilization," said Eric Dinerstein, a conservation biologist at RESOLVE, a nonprofit group. "Humanity is heading for an environmental cliff — so we have to do a U-turn,"

he said. "We know that the creation of more protected areas is absolutely vital. The questions are: How much, where, and how fast?" □

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Monkey business: Researchers find origins of Florida colony

DANIA BEACH, Fla. (AP) —

A colony of monkeys has lived for about 70 years in urban South Florida, near jets taking off from a nearby airport and fuel storage tanks.

No one was quite sure where they came from. Until now.

Researchers at Florida Atlantic University say they have traced the colony's origins to the Dania Chimpanzee Farm. The South Florida SunSentinel reported Wednesday there was a monkey escape from the farm in 1948, with most of the monkeys recaptured. But not all of them.

"The community still loves them," said Deborah "Missy" Williams, lead author of the study, who is in the

FAU Biological Sciences Department. "They care for them. They want them protected." □



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'Too Close' bonds close friends Emily Watson, Clara Salaman

NEW YORK (AP) — There was a very good chance that Oscar- and Emmy-nominated Emily Watson would end up in the new mini-series "Too Close." After all, one of her oldest friends wrote it.

Watson has known actor-turned-author Clara Salaman since both were 5 years old. Now, in their 50s, they've finally collaborated on their first project and even COVID-19 lockdown couldn't stop them.

"It's amazing, isn't it? It's just gives me such joy that it all worked out because it's such a precarious universe trying to put things together," Watson said.

"Too Close," a three-part harrowing series on AMC+ which debuts Thursday, aired earlier this year in Britain to rapturous reviews. It's based on Salaman's novel, which she wrote under the pseudonym Natalie Daniels.

Watson plays a buttoned-down, no-nonsense forensic psychiatrist trying to assess the mental state of a criminal suspect who drove her car over a bridge with two kids inside, including her daughter.



This image released by AMC+ shows Emily Watson, left, and Denise Gough in a scene from "Too Close," debuting on Thursday.

Associated Press

The suspect, played by a ferocious Denise Gough, has been dubbed the "Yummy Mummy Monster" by the British tabloids and claims not to remember anything about the incident. She is facing 30 years or a lifetime in a psychiatric hospital.

The two — a broken, angry woman facing life behind bars and a supposed cool professional — begin a sort

of mental cat-and-mouse game, each probing the other's weaknesses.

"Underneath that chilly veneer, I reckon you've got quite a temper. What are you so angry about?" the suspect asks the psychiatrist, who responds: "Don't talk to me like you know me. You do not know me." Salaman said she is drawn to mothers who kill their

own. "I've always been absolutely fascinated by women who do it and thinking, 'Well, what has to be going on in your head that you think the best option is to kill your children?'" she said. "So then I just sort of worked backwards."

Salaman's screenplay crackles with great lines. In one scene, Watson gets a bit bossy, triggering this observation from the suspect. "You're being very assertive today. Very Helen Mirren. It's quite sexy."

Over time, both women begin to understand each other and share searing moments of pain and guilt. "We are the wrecked people," the inmate says to her psychiatrist.

"As an acting exercise, it was very much about two people unpeeling each other. The psychiatrist is not the composed, together professional that she likes to think that she is," said Watson.

The Yummy Mummy Monster is deeply humanized and the psychiatrist — once dubbed "Little Miss Mary Poppins" by the suspect — must face her own imperfections. Viewers may even shockingly start identifying with the suspect.

"It draws a very sympathetic portrait of the person in that situation and or really makes us try to understand how somebody gets that,"

said Watson. "We're all one step away from doing something desperate."

The series was a critical hit in Britain, with The Independent saying "You won't see more blatant awards fodder this year, but that doesn't mean 'Too Close' won't win them, or that they'll be undeserved." The Guardian called it "a fantastically compelling, brilliantly scripted whodunnit." Watson is quick to credit Gough — whose stage work includes "People, Places and Things" and "Angels in America" — as an "intense talent" able to capture damage and explosiveness. "It was amazing to go onto the dance floor with somebody like that," Watson said.

She and Salaman have known each other since nursery school and through their teens as both pursued acting careers. They both starred as 13-year-olds in a production of "As You Like It," with Salaman as Rosalind and Watson as Celia.

Salaman, who appeared on "The Bill" from 1999 to 2001 before turning to writing, handed over the manuscript of "Too Close" to Watson even before it was published, telling her friend it might make a good TV piece.

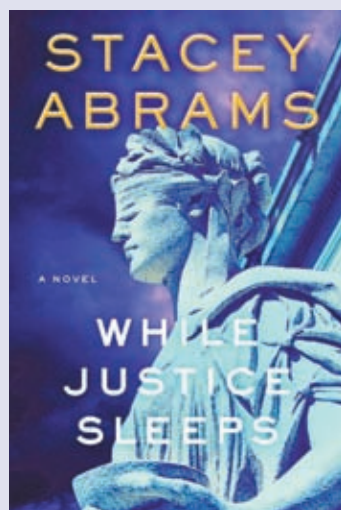
It was then that it dawned on the author that having Watson consider a part in it made a great deal of sense. "I said, 'You can read it.' Then I went, 'Actually, Emily, you'd be brilliant in either part.'"

Watson, who has earned Oscar nods for "Breaking the Waves" and "Hilary and Jackie" and an Emmy nomination for "Chernobyl," shot the series during the pandemic, with masks required, COVID-19 tests three times a week and the cast and crew consigned to different bubbles.

Salaman visited the set a few times and watched the dailies, but the two old friends are looking forward to a time when they can get together and celebrate.

"Emily and I know each other so thoroughly, so bonded, from so young. □

Stacey Abrams has deal for 2 more political thrillers



This image released by Doubleday shows "While Justice Sleeps," a novel by Stacey Abrams. (Doubleday via Associated Press)

By **HILLEL ITALIE**
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Nearly 20 years after her first novels were published, Stacey

Abrams is hitting full stride as a writer.

The voting rights activist, grassroots organizer and former Georgia Democratic gubernatorial candidate has a deal for two political thrillers, Doubleday and Anchor Books announced Thursday. The new novels will bring back the gifted and intrepid law clerk Avery Keene from Abrams' current work, "While Justice Sleeps," which came out last week and is already a No. 1 New York Times bestseller with more than 100,000 copies in print.

"I am thrilled to continue the story of Avery Keene — an exciting and brilliant protagonist — with Doubleday," Abrams said in a statement. "Avery began

her adventures in 'While Justice Sleeps,' and now we can follow her as she discovers what's next for her and those she loves in the years ahead."

Earlier this month, Berkley announced it was reissuing a trilogy of romance novels Abrams published through Harlequin in the early 2000s under the pen-name Selena Montgomery.

Meanwhile, NBCUniversal International Studios has optioned the rights for a television series based on "While Justice Sleeps," with Abrams serving as producer.

Abrams, 47, is also the author of the nonfiction books "Lead from the Outside" and "Our Time Is Now." □

Warriors, Grizzlies meet again with playoff berth at stake

By JANIE McCAULEY

AP Sports Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Stephen Curry has no concerns about his Golden State Warriors bouncing back quickly from the sting of losing to LeBron James and the defending champion Lakers in their first play-in game. He's seen his teammates do it for the past month just to put themselves in this position.

And there's no choice now if Golden State wants to get back to the playoffs, with a familiar, hungry Memphis team standing in the way.

"It is a win-or-go-home scenario," Curry said. "We've had a high confidence and put together a string of wins and then had a tough loss and had to bounce back. So we've been there."

Warriors coach Steve Kerr is counting on veteran stars Curry and Draymond Green guiding Golden State after an emotional 103-100 defeat Wednesday at Los Angeles and coming through against Memphis on Friday night in another high-stakes game at home, where this group went 6-0 to end the regular season.

"Steph, Draymond, (Kevon Looney), those guys have



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry, left, shoots as Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis defends during the second half of an NBA basketball Western Conference Play-In game Wednesday, May 19, 2021, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

been in the playoffs year after year," Kerr said. "This is what the playoffs are about. Every game is hugely emotional and you always have to respond one way or the other, whether you're coming off a win or you're coming off a loss."

It's the Grizzlies coming with some momentum af-

ter they eliminated the San Antonio Spurs 100-96 in the first Western Conference play-in game Wednesday night.

"Our plan is to pack for a three-game road trip," Grizzlies guard Ja Morant said. The Warriors came out on top during the last meeting between these teams,

beating Memphis 113-101 at Chase Center in the regular-season finale Sunday that determined the play-in tournament seeding.

So, Curry and Co. will now host the Grizzlies for the second time in six days vying for a spot in the playoffs. This time the winner moves on and the loser heads

home for the offseason.

"I think it will be very challenging. It's pretty much playoffs, everybody's trying to win, everybody's going to play their hearts out," Golden State's Juan Toscano-Anderson said. "This is a good team."

CONTROLLING EMOTIONS

Curry wants the Warriors to enjoy this opportunity, even if Golden State hasn't been to the playoffs since losing the 2019 NBA Finals to Toronto in the franchise's fifth straight trip.

"It'll be nice to be at home in front of our fans, take advantage of the moment," Curry said. "Just have fun with it, don't put too much pressure on yourself thinking you've got to be perfect, you've got to make every shot."

The Warriors have thrived with contributions from the backups.

"We've still got an opportunity to get in there and still make some noise," Warriors guard Kent Bazemore said. "It's great, we get another crack at it, we get another chance to sharpen some things up and continue to build. We've got as much basketball in front of us as we want at this point." □

Vendrame claims 1st Grand Tour stage win, Bernal keeps lead

BAGNO DI ROMAGNA, Italy (AP) — Italian cyclist Andrea Vendrame held off the rest of the breakaway pack to win the 12th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Thursday for his first victory in a Grand Tour and Egan Bernal kept the leader's pink jersey.

Vendrame, who rides for AG2R Citroën, edged out Chris Hamilton in a sprint at the end of the 212-kilometer (132-mile) route from Siena to Bagno di Romagna that featured four categorized climbs.

"What an incredible feeling. I can't even speak or find the right words to describe how I feel now," the 26-year-old Vendrame said. "After a difficult period where I had an injury, this win at the Giro is something indescribable."

There was also a sprint for

third, with Gianluca Brambilla narrowly beating George Bennett, but only after a late swerve that left Bennett throwing up a hand in frustration. Brambilla was later relegated to fourth.

The duo finished 15 seconds behind Vendrame.

All four had been part of a large breakaway.

Bernal crossed the line in the peloton to maintain his 45-second lead over Aleksandr Vlasov. Nobody else is within a minute of the 2019 Tour de France winner, with third-place Damiano Caruso 1:12 behind. Vincenzo Nibali attacked over the top of the final climb and finished seven seconds ahead of the peloton. The two-time Giro winner is still more than four minutes behind Bernal.

Friday's 13th stage is an en-

tirely flat 198-kilometer (123-mile) route from Ravenna to Verona that pays tribute to writer and philosopher Dante Alighieri on the 700th anniversary of his death. It will also give the riders a break before hitting the high mountains the following day.

"It was a really hard day for everyone so we are happy because we have finished well, but it was a really tough stage," Bernal said. "It's a Grand Tour, and for the GC guys there is no easy stage, you know, we need to go for every day. So for tomorrow we need to be really focused."

A number of riders abandoned the race during the stage. Marc Soler and Alessandro De Marchi crashed in separate incidents, while Gino Mader, Kobe Goossens, Fausto Masnada and



Italy's Andrea Vendrame celebrates winning the twelfth stage of the Giro d'Italia cycling race, from Siena to Bagno di Romagna, Italy, Thursday, May 20, 2021.

Associated Press

Alex Dowsett all retired due to illness and injury.

Soler tried to continue before eventually conceding. De Marchi was taken away in an ambulance.

"Dema was taken to hospital and was diagnosed with a broken right collarbone

and six broken ribs," said De Marchi's team Israel Start-Up Nation. "He also broke his first and second thoracic vertebra.

"He did not suffer any head injury, but does have to stay in the hospital for at least one night." □

Major start as Koepka finds his way to share of lead at PGA

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C. (AP)

— One hole into the PGA Championship, Brooks Koepka was more worried about his brain than his ailing knee.

His opening tee shot on the 10th hole at Kiawah Island was struck poorly and didn't quite clear a waste area. Koepka tried to do too much from a soft lie in the sand and barely got it out. It led to a double bogey, and the toughest part of the Ocean Course was still to come.

But this is a major, and this is Koepka, and that's when he's at his best. He knuckled down from that mess by running off six birdies the rest of the way for a 3-under 69 and a share of the early lead Thursday.

"The first rule is, if you're in trouble, get the hell out. So mental mistake there. I deserved every bit of that double bogey," Koepka said. "I can't play with any mistakes, maybe one a day, and that was my one. And I got it out of the way." The wind was stiff enough that only four of the 78 players in the morning wave broke 70, and only a dozen others managed to break par.

Keegan Bradley, a PGA champion from 10 years ago, was one of only three players to get as low as 4 under in the morning before making a mistake,



Brooks Koepka misses a birdie putt on the ninth hole during the first round of the PGA Championship golf tournament on the Ocean Course Thursday, May 20, 2021, in Kiawah Island, S.C.

Associated Press

which was inevitable on this course. Bradley also shot a 69, along with Viktor Hovland of Norway and Aaron Wise.

Koepka wasn't alone in the odd blunder. He was among the few who recovered.

Justin Thomas was going along nicely on the back nine until he had trouble getting out of the sand and then chopped his way through the rough for a double bogey on the 18th hole. Two holes later, he sent a sand shot over the green and just into a hazard for another 6 on the par-5 second. He shot 75. Rory McIlroy, coming off a victory at Quail Hollow two weeks ago, sent his opening tee shot into a water hazard some 30 yards right

of safety. He salvaged a bogey, but certainly not his round. McIlroy made bogey on three of the par 5s for a 75, his worst start ever in a PGA Championship.

Both turned down requests to talk about their rounds. The design of the Ocean Course is unique in that the opening four holes and finishing five holes go one direction, and the nine holes in between go the other. Whether they started on the front or the back, there was rough patches somewhere along the way.

What helped is that the PGA of America moved up tee boxes, as expected, to account for the wind. The course played to 7,660 yards — 178 yards shorter than the scorecard — though that didn't make it

easy. Thomas, for one, still hit 7-wood into the 214-yard 17th.

Martin Laird ran off four straight birdies — three of them on holes dead into the wind — only to close with a pair of bogeys for a wild round. He started with three straight pars and made only two the rest of the day. That put him at 70, along with defending PGA champion Collin Morikawa. "I kind of went out with the mindset this week, even though it's hard, don't give the course too much respect," Laird said. "You still have to take on shots when you have the chance. When I had a spot where I could go at the flag, I was making sure I kept doing it and hit a lot of really nice shots and managed to

make some birdies.

"You're going to hit bogeys on this golf course," he said. "It's nice when you can throw in a bunch of birdies, too."

Rickie Fowler was among those at 71.

John Daly shot an 85, one of five scores in the 80s from the early starters. There were certain to be more by the end of the day.

Finally heeled from a left knee injury, Koepka injured ligaments in his right knee in March and has played only twice since then, the Masters and last week in Dallas. He has built a reputation for playing his best in the majors, with back-to-back titles in the U.S. Open and the PGA Championship over the last five years.

Even while not he's at full strength, his outlook doesn't change. Despite a double bogey to start on one of the more difficult courses in the PGA rotation, he didn't flinch.

"It's a major. I'm going to show up. I'm ready to play," he said. "I love it when it's difficult. I think that's why I do so well in the majors. I just know mentally I can grind it out."

Dustin Johnson, Jon Rahm and Jordan Spieth were among those playing in the afternoon. It wasn't quite as windy as it was during practice rounds, but it was windy enough. Kiawah is a challenge on a calm day. □



Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria returns a ball to Pablo Cuevas from Uruguay during their round of 8 men's match, at the ATP 250 Tennis Geneva Open tournament, in Geneva, Switzerland, Thursday, May 20, 2021.

Associated Press

Swiss teen Stricker's Geneva Open run ended by Andujar

GENEVA (AP) — Swiss teenager Dominic Stricker's promising tournament debut ended Thursday in the Geneva Open quarterfinals with a 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 loss to veteran Pablo Andujar. The 18-year-old Stricker was up a break in the second set against the 35-year-old Andujar, who beat Roger Federer in the previous round.

Stricker, the French Open junior champion, practiced with Federer before the season in Dubai and came to Geneva with a

wild-card entry and No. 419 ranking.

That ranking is set for a big move after Stricker beat top-50 players Marin Cilic and Marton Fucsovics in the first two rounds of the rain-affected clay-court event.

Another 35-year-old, Pablo Cuevas, eliminated fourth-seeded Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (3), 6-3 to advance to the semifinals.

Third-seeded Casper Ruud struggled early before overcoming Dominik Koepfer 2-6, 6-1, 6-4. Ruud will

face Andujar in the semifinals Friday.

The last semifinal spot was to be decided in the late match between Denis Shapovalov and Laslo Djere, who each had second-round wins earlier Thursday.

The second-seeded Shapovalov was on court for nearly 2 ½ hours to beat qualifier Marco Cecchinato 6-7 (4), 7-5, 6-1. Djere finished off a rain-delayed match against sixth-seeded Fabio Fognini 6-3, 6-7 (2), 6-1. □